

REQUIRED TOPIC 6: DIABETES CONDITIONS REQUIRING EMERGENT OR URGENT CARE**STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

People with diabetes can experience conditions that require either emergent care or medical follow-up quickly to treat the problem and/or to prevent further health issues. Problems that require emergent care include: cardiac symptoms, severe depression and extremely high or low blood glucose readings. Conditions that require timely clinical follow-up include variations in blood glucose readings (either high or low) that are not life-threatening and elevations of blood pressure that will be injurious to health if prolonged.

KEY MESSAGES

1. Because people with diabetes are at higher risk for heart disease, it is important to know the symptoms of heart attack.
2. People with diabetes are at higher risk for a stroke as well.
3. Diabetes and other chronic diseases can contribute to the development of severe depression which requires immediate attention when accompanied by suicidal thoughts or plans.
4. Blood glucose levels that are higher or lower than the target range and accompanied by symptoms need prompt attention.
5. Blood pressure that is higher than normal contributes to stroke, kidney and eye problems.

BACKGROUND**HEART DISEASE**

People with diabetes are at 2-4 times higher risk of heart disease than people without the disease. Knowing what symptoms to watch for and what to do if they occur is an important part of getting the care you need quickly. Call 911 if you experience the following symptoms:

- Chest pain or pressure (like an elephant is sitting on your chest), pain radiating to your shoulder, jaw or arms
- Difficulty breathing
- Lightheadedness/weakness
- Sweating
- Nausea/vomiting

Women may experience different types of symptoms than men. In addition to or in place of the symptoms listed above, their symptoms may also include:

- Shortness of breath
- Pressure or pain in the lower back or upper abdomen
- Dizziness or fainting
- Upper back pressure

- Extreme fatigue

Symptoms of heart attack may also be similar to the experience of very low blood glucose. Both conditions may cause sweating, light headedness, dizziness, and nausea. Do not assume that you are experiencing a low blood sugar reaction; check your blood sugar and call 911 if it is in the normal range.

STROKE

People with diabetes are 5 times more likely to have a stroke. The warning signs of stroke are:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, or loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden headache with no known cause.

Remember the acronym: FAST.

F is for **Face**—Is one side of the face drooping?

A is for **Arm**—Is one arm weak or numb?

S is for **Speech**—Is speech slurred? Is the person unable to speak or hard to understand?

T is for **Time** to call 911--If someone shows any of these symptoms, even if the symptoms go away, call 9-1-1 and get the person to the hospital immediately. Check the time so you'll know when the first symptoms appeared.

DEPRESSION

Chronic illnesses such as diabetes are often accompanied by depression. Feeling down or sad for longer than 2 weeks should be reported to your health care provider. However, if you feel severely depressed to the extent that you are thinking about suicide or have plans for suicide you need to be seen urgently by a mental health professional.

HIGH OR LOW BLOOD GLUCOSE

High blood glucose (hyperglycemia) usually has a gradual onset (over days). Its causes can vary from an illness to not taking enough insulin or other diabetes medications. If you experience symptoms such as increased thirst and urination, feel weak or tired, have a dry mouth or blurry vision, or unexplained fatigue call the clinic. If you also feel dizzy when you stand or others notice that you seem confused, you should call 911 and go directly to the hospital.

Low blood glucose (hypoglycemia) can occur in people taking medication for diabetes and when you have had too much exercise, eaten too little food, or taken too much diabetes medication. Low blood glucose can cause you to feel sweaty, nervous or anxious, weak, hungry, or irritable. It can also cause headache, a fast heartbeat, numbness around your nose or mouth, and cause you to feel confused. Learn to treat occasional low blood

sugars by reviewing the information in Topic 3. If you have several blood glucose readings below 70 mg/dl on over 3/4 of your readings over the past week, make an appointment to be seen by your provider or the diabetes team.

BLOOD PRESSURE CHANGES

Increased blood pressure can contribute to stroke, kidney disease and eye problems. If your blood pressure reading is over 140/90 contact your health care provider for an appointment within one month. If your blood pressure is over 180/110, contact your health care provider to be seen within one week.

PATIENT OUTCOMES/GOALS

By the end of the educational session, the client with diabetes will be able to:

- Identify important signs/symptoms of medical problems needing prompt attention.
- Identify conditions requiring emergency care.

CHW ACTIONS	PARTICIPANT ACTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review medical conditions and symptoms requiring emergency care. • Review medical conditions and symptoms that require a clinic appointment for evaluation and treatment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe what conditions and symptoms require emergency care and which require you to call your clinic. • Keep emergency and clinic phone information where you and others can see it easily.

TOOLS/TEACHING AIDES

AIDES:

- American Heart Association, "Heart Attack Symptoms in Women." www.heart.org. American Stroke Association. www.stroke.org

HANDOUTS

1. **Topic 6 Coversheet**.....[English](#) | [Spanish](#)
2. **Act in Time to Heart Attack Signs**[English](#) | [Spanish](#)
Source: [National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute](#)

3. What is a Stroke?[English](#) | [Spanish](#)Source: [Public Health – Seattle & King County](#)**4. Action Plan.....**[English](#) | [Spanish](#)Source: [Public Health – Seattle & King County](#)

Version	Date	description	Staff	final
V.1.	12/23/2011	Original	KA/ JK	Yes
V.2.	09/16/2013	Revised	JK	Yes
V.2.1	07/24/2014	Updated Formatting	ND	Yes